

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN AND THE CITY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

1.1A The Purpose of a General Plan

State law in California requires each city and county to have an adopted general plan. In essence, the general plan serves as the “blueprint” for future growth and development within the particular locality.

The General Plan functions as a guide for governmental decision-makers, citizens and the development community with respect to land use and development. It needs to be visionary and creative, yet realistic and achievable in its goals through sound policies and implementation measures. The Plan must provide a rational and defensible basis for decision-making now and into the future. The Plan must also offer solutions for addressing and alleviating identified problems in areas within its jurisdiction.

In adopting the General Plan by resolution of the City Council, the City assumes the responsibility to implement it, to maintain it, and to communicate with citizens and other agencies regarding the Plan’s goals and policies.

1.1B Scope and Authority

California Government Code Section 65302 specifies that each general plan address seven “issue” areas which directly relate to, and influence, the land use decision process: land use, circulation, housing, the conservation of resources, the preservation of open space, the noise environment, and the protection of public safety. Although inclusion of each of the seven issue areas is mandatory (referred to in this document as “elements”), other issues or elements may be added at the discretion of the City so long as the City complies with all requirements governing content and adoption.

The content of each element is prescribed by the State of California General Plan Guidelines, published by the Office of Planning and Research (OPR). Specific requirements for the Noise Element are defined by the Office of Noise Control, California Department of Health. And though State law specifies the basic content of the General Plan, it allows each city to use any format deemed appropriate or convenient.

Each “issue” area, or element, must be responded to with goals, policies and implementation strategies/measures designed to provide a safe and pleasant environment in the future. Each element of a general plan has equal stature, i.e., no element may supersede another element in authority.

Section 65303 of the Government Code provides a jurisdiction latitude to include additional elements or topics within a general plan that are of special or unique interest, such as community design, historic preservation, and economic revitalization. The contents of optional elements are to be determined by a City based on its needs and objectives. Upon adoption, any optional elements or components of a general plan will have the same force and effect as the State-mandated elements.

Components of the Plan are interrelated and therefore must be consistent with each other. The general plan must comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies and actions for the adopting agency: ie. each element's data, assumption, analysis, goals, policies, and implementation programs must be consistent and/or complementary.

1.1C Time Horizon

As a framework for planning the future, a general plan normally contains a time horizon.

For practical purposes in framing goals and policies, the South Pasadena General Plan addresses a 15 year time period. Selection of an approximate year 2010 horizon for the Plan allows for structuring of an implementation program to achieve short-term, mid-range and long-term objectives.

1.1D Ongoing Maintenance and Amendment

Once adopted, the General Plan does not remain static. It is important to evaluate and report the effectiveness of programs to decision-makers so programs can be continued, modified or replaced in order to continue progress toward goals. As time passes, certain assumptions made in the general plan may no longer be valid, due to changing circumstances or new information. As the formal policy position of the City, it needs to be kept current.

State law provides for this by allowing amendments to any one of the mandatory elements of the general plan up to four times per calendar year (Government Code Section 65358b). This limitation does not apply to amendment of optional elements or components; amendments requested and necessary for affordable housing; and amendments necessary to comply with a court decision involving the legal adequacy of the general plan.

Every general plan amendment must be consistent with the rest of the general plan. Appropriate changes in other elements should be made to maintain consistency. An amendment to the general plan constitutes a "project" under the California Environmental Quality Act and, therefore, the amendment must be evaluated for environmental impacts.

The law provides additional direction on how cities can maintain the plan as a contemporary policy guide. Government Code Section 65400[b] directs the Planning Department to report annually to the City Council on the status of the plan and progress in its implementation. State guidelines further recommend that "...The entire plan, including the basic policies, should be thoroughly reviewed at least every five years and revised as necessary to reflect new conditions, local attitudes and political realities."

1.1E Definition of Planning Components and Terms

Goals, policies and implementation measures (strategies) are the heart of the General Plan. In following these directives, the City will chart the course of growth and development and will determine the nature of the environment and the future character of South Pasadena.

- The goals, policies and strategies in each element of the General Plan derive from needs and desires of the community revealed by background research, public workshops, GPAC meetings, planning staff input, and comment from the Planning Commission and City Council.

Goal, policy and strategy as used in the Plan are defined below:

Goal: *A goal is a broad vision of what the community wants to achieve or provide; a general, overall, and ultimate purpose, aim or end toward which the City will direct effort.* It is a statement of a desired condition based on community values. Goals are general in nature and usually timeless.

Policy: *A policy provides direction or establishes a general course of action that is intended to achieve one or more goals.* A policy implies a clear commitment by decision makers that is referred to in reviewing project proposals or in guiding other city actions.

Strategy: *A strategy is an action or activity carried out in response to adopted goals and policies.*

- In addition to the above components, the General Plan Advisory Committee, overseeing the development of this document, elected to identify three more components relating to different levels of the planning process. These additional components constitute: Guiding Principles and Focus Area Objectives and Guidelines defined below.

Guiding Principles: Guiding Principles reflect the pervasive community concerns and values emanating from the Vision Statement, which was developed by the Downtown Revitalization Task Force during Phase I of the planning process. These principles, which apply to all elements of the General Plan, are intended to set the themes for South Pasadena's growth and development for the next 15 years.

Objectives: As used in this document, objectives apply to the eight specific Focus Areas described in Chapter II. As such, they are intended to identify the specific outcomes the community wants to achieve or provide for in each Focus Area.

Guidelines: Guidelines for Focus Areas are more specific, yet. They identify the actions or activities that will be carried out to achieve specific objectives.

1.1F Required Consistency with Other Plans

In order to link the long-range comprehensive planning framework of a general plan to the day-to-day actions of the City, the State requires consistency of certain local actions with the general plan. Some statutes that do not mandate consistency with the general plan still require findings or a report on how proposed actions conform to the general plan.

The State considers an action, program, or project to be consistent with a general plan if it furthers the objectives and policies of the general plan and does not obstruct the attainment of the objectives and policies.

Following is a partial list of provisions in State law that require local actions and documents to be consistent with the general plan.

- **Zoning:** Government Code Section 65860 requires that the zoning ordinances of general law cities be consistent with the general plan. The City of South Pasadena is a General Law City.
- **Subdivisions:** Government Code Sections 66473.5 and 66474 require that subdivision and parcel map approvals in all jurisdictions be consistent with the general plan.
- **Reservations of Land with Subdivisions:** Government Code Section 66479 requires that reservations of land for parks, recreational facilities, fire stations, libraries and other public uses within a subdivision conform to the general plan.
- **Open Space:** Government Code Section 65566 requires that acquisition, disposal, restriction, or regulation of open space land by a city or county be consistent with the Open Space Element of the general plan. Government Code Section 65567 prohibits the issuance of building permits, approval of subdivision maps, and adoption of open space zoning ordinances that are inconsistent with the Open Space Element of the general plan.. Government Code Section 65910 requires that every city and county adopt open space provisions in their zoning ordinances that are consistent with the Open Space Element of the general plan. Government Code Section 51084 requires cities and counties accepting or approving an open space easement to make a finding that preservation of the open space land is consistent with the general plan.
- **Capital Improvements:** Government Code Sections 65401 and 65402 require a review and report on the consistency of proposed city, county and special district capital projects, including land acquisitions and disposal, with the general plan.
- **Development Agreements:** Government Code Section 65867.5 requires that development agreements between developers and local governments be consistent with the general plan.
- **Special Housing Programs:** Health and Safety Code Section 50689.5 requires that housing and housing programs developed under Health and Safety Code Sections 50680 et. seq. for the developmentally disabled, mentally disordered, and physically disabled be consistent with the Housing Element of the general plan.

- **Parking Authority Projects:** Street and Highway Code Section 32503 requires that parking authorities, in planning and locating any parking facility, are “subject to the relationship of the facility to any officially adopted master plan or sections of such master plan for the development of the area in which the authority functions to the same extent as if it were a private entity.” The location of a parking facility, therefore, must be consistent with the general plan.
- **Project Review under CEQA:** Title 14, California Administrative Code Section 15080 requires examination of projects subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act for consistency with the general plan.
- **Transmission Lines:** Public Utilities Code Section 12808.5 requires cities and counties approving the electrical transmission and distribution lines of municipal utility districts to make a finding concerning the consistency of the lines with the general plan.
- **Hazardous Waste Management:** Chapter 1504 of the Statutes of 1986 (Tanner Bill) requires each county to prepare a county-wide hazardous waste management plan. Each county plan is then to be incorporated into the general plans of all cities within the County’s jurisdiction.

1.1G Related Plans and Programs

LOCAL

- **Adopted Redevelopment Project Areas**

The City of South Pasadena currently has one active redevelopment project: the Downtown Revitalization Redevelopment Project Area. The Altos de Monterey Redevelopment project was the first project to be adopted and completed.

Figure I-1
Adopted Redevelopment Areas of South Pasadena

Other plans adopted are as follows:

- **Altos de Monterey Redevelopment Project Area (completed)**

The Altos de Monterey Redevelopment Project Area was established in October of 1958. The area was classified as an Open Land Project because at that time the area was vacant. The adopted redevelopment plan proposed a residential community with associated infrastructure and public facilities. The area is currently built-out with 640 single-family dwelling units.

- **Downtown Revitalization Redevelopment Project Area (active)**

The Downtown Revitalization Redevelopment Project Area was established in August of 1975. The project area consists of approximately 28 acres situated within the downtown commercial district of South Pasadena. The Project Area has been designated as a proposed commercial redevelopment project within the City. Only retail commercial sales uses, commercial facilities, professional office facilities and religious facilities are allowed to be developed.

- **Altos De Monterey Overlay (Adopted by the City on October 18, 1995)**

Establishes an overlay zone in the Zoning Code for the Altos De Monterey subdivision that preserves the development pattern and incorporates CC& R provisions.

- **Mission Street Specific Plan (Adopted by the City on April 4, 1996)**

South Pasadena's first Specific Plan, with boundaries as shown on Figure I-1.

REGIONAL

- **MetroRail Blue Line**

The proposed "Blue Line" is a light-rail line extension from downtown Los Angeles, through South Pasadena and into Pasadena, using the present Santa Fe railroad right-of-way. This line will connect with the Los Angeles-Long Beach Metro Blue Line and provide passenger service intended to alleviate commuter congestion.

- **The proposed 710 Freeway Extension**

The proposed 710 Freeway project is an eight-lane freeway, not including access roads, between Route I-10 and Route I-210. The length of the portion proposed to be completed is 4.5 miles. If built as proposed, traveling south to north, it would skirt the City of Alhambra, pass through the El Sereno neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles, quadrant the City of South Pasadena (with the Pasadena Freeway bisecting the City east to west), and pass through the southwest historic neighborhoods of the City of Pasadena.

Figure I-2 illustrates the route alignments adopted by CalTrans.

- **The Proposed Multi-Mode/Low-Build Alternative.**

The City of South Pasadena and a consortium of freeway opponents have sponsored a Multi-Mode/Low Build Plan to provide an affordable alternative to completing the 710 corridor. The plan includes southern traffic diffusions, including a two block freeway extension and construction of railroad overpasses; northern traffic diversions to commercial mobility corridors; “smart street” computerized intersection and surface street improvements; arterial traffic systems and management; and traffic calming in residential areas. The plan anticipates Metrolink ridership and completion of the Pasadena Blue Line light-rail project with the benefits from reduction in auto traffic which will follow.

- **Southern California Association of Governments**

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the agency responsible for developing and adopting regional growth forecasts for Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside and Imperial Counties. The population totals and growth distribution are used in planning and future capacity of highways and transit systems, quantity and location of housing, water supply systems and the siting and sizing of sewage treatment systems. These forecasts are revised every two to four years, and include input from county and city governments.

SCAG is presently revising the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), which includes elements governing regional mobility, housing, air quality and growth management, among others. The new Strategic Element will contain broad regional goals and operating principles and strategies. The Regional Comprehensive Plan will address the distribution of growth, both housing and employment, within the SCAG region. Development projections adopted by the City of South Pasadena should be consistent with those given in the RCP, though RCP projections may not be available prior to the adoption of South Pasadena’s Land Use and Circulation Elements.

- **South Coast Air Quality Management District.**

The City of South Pasadena is located within the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 required that each state adopt an implementation plan outlining pollution control measures to attain federal air quality standards in non-attainment areas of the state. The SCAQMD is situated within a non-attainment area.

The most recent regional Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) was approved by the Southern California Air Quality Management District on November 15, 1996. The AQMP is a comprehensive control program that will bring the basin into compliance with all state and federal air quality standards. One of the provisions of the AQMD is that cities must address air quality issues in their General Plans either by preparing a separate air quality element or by incorporating programs into other elements of their general plans. The City of South Pasadena has joined with the other members of the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Council to prepare a Subregional AQMP.

In terms of mobility, South Pasadena must coordinate with various regional transportation agencies including the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS), the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the Arroyo-Verdugo Transportation Coalition, and the San Gabriel Valley Coalition of Governments (SGVCOG), in addition to adjoining municipal jurisdictions and the County of Los Angeles.

In recognition of the regional aspects of growth management, legislation is being considered by the governor and the state legislature to address this important issue. South Pasadena will continue to manage local growth through the General Plan in a manner consistent with state and regional policies.

- **West San Gabriel Valley Air Quality Plan**

Funded through a demonstration grant by the Air Quality Management District, the 16 member cities of the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Council (Alhambra, Arcadia, Duarte, El Monte, Glendale, La Canada Flintridge, Monrovia, Monterey Park, Pasadena, Rosemead, San Gabriel, San Marino, Sierra Madre, South El Monte, South Pasadena and Temple City) agreed to participate in the development of an area-wide plan. The City adopted the plan on June 2, 1993 by Resolution #6165.

1.1H Plan Antecedents

South Pasadena's General Plan was first prepared in 1963 and amended in 1986.

This revision to the General Plan is an update, expansion and reorganization of the 1963 General Plan prepared for the City by the consulting firm of Simon Eisner Associates prior to the formalization of State law requirements.

The 1963 Plan included a detailed inventory of existing land uses, a neighborhood analysis, an economic analysis, and land use and circulation discussions. The land use plan graphic from the 1963 Plan was subsequently amended in 1986 with minor use modifications and the addition of certain new land use designations. Subsequently other elements were prepared and adopted: Open Space and Conservation (1973); Housing (1984-1988); Noise (1975); Public Safety and Seismic Safety (1975); and Source Reduction and Recycling (1996).

This revision to the General Plan supersedes all but the West San Gabriel Valley Air Quality Element, the Housing Element and the Source Reduction and Recycling Element, each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

Related Programs

- **Downtown Revitalization Task Force Studies**

The Downtown Revitalization Task Force (DRTF) is a citizens advisory group originally established by the City Council in 1989 to formulate a consensus-based framework for future planning and land use development decisions. The work of the Task Force has been divided between the full committee and smaller subcommittees and has focused on the study of specific issues associated with commercial, manufacturing - industrial, and residential use. The Task Force prepared a Phase I Report in August/1990 and a Phase II report in June/1992 which address these issues.

The Phase I Report focused on evaluating South Pasadena's needs and resources with regard to the revitalization and preservation of commercial and residential areas. The report contains a narrative statement of the City's vision and individual sub-committee reports representing the recommendations of the commercial, residential and industrial study groups.

The Phase II Report focused on unresolved issues and recommendations identified in the Phase I Report. Specifically, the Phase II Report provided an analysis of eminent domain, revenue needs, parking, residential down-zoning, and the City's General Plan, as well as a story-board of Mission Street identifying existing design and architectural characteristics to be preserved and encouraged in future revitalization and development efforts.

- **General Plan Advisory Committee**

In 1992, the DRTF was reconstituted as the General Plan Advisory Committee to over-see revisions to the existing General Plan. See "General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Roles and Responsibilities," July 8, 1992, City of South Pasadena.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY AND PLAN OVERVIEW

1.2A Community Characteristics and Historical Background

- **Community Character**

South Pasadena prides itself on its small town character. One of the primary goals of the revision of the General Plan is to manage change within this context.

Less than three and one-half square miles in area, South Pasadena lies between the far larger City of Pasadena, of which it was once a part, and the metropolis of Los Angeles. Small, proud and independent, the City of South Pasadena has battled for a hundred years to preserve its status as a distinct - and distinctive - community.

- **Small Town Atmosphere**

The principle of harmonizing change and preserving the existing environment is of tremendous importance to South Pasadena residents. Harmonizing change requires that new development and other physical alterations respect the existing character and scale of the City. Change and development must be accomplished in a fashion that enhances and blends with South Pasadena's existing qualities. Public and quasi-public spaces - streets and alleys, yards and rear facades, parking districts, parks and open spaces - are important to the civic impression as are individual buildings, and should be given equal design attention. Preservation of South Pasadena's scale, traditional urban form, and historic identity need to be given highest priority in the consideration of future development.

- **Neighborhood Protection**

The future viability and stability of residential areas in the City depends upon the effectiveness of measures taken to ensure compatible development, to encourage maintenance and rehabilitation, and to preserve existing desirable housing stock and historic structures.

1.2B Community Vision Statement

The revised General Plan, developed under the auspices of the GPAC, expresses an updated "vision" of the future for the City and prescribes techniques to manage change so that the vision can be achieved. The vision embodies an active approach to shaping the dynamics of change that influence form, character and economic well-being.

A vision for a community is a mental picture of its future created by anticipating or conceiving important desired community characteristics.

- It is **imaginative** in that it envisions conditions that may not now exist. The Vision may well include certain existing characteristics to be preserved, as well as those yet to be achieved. It anticipates the results of numerous future events and actions.
- It is **practical** in that it requires specific actions to be taken and must have continuing support by community leaders and opinion makers. This can occur only if the Vision reinforces community values that can be sustained over a long period of time.
- It is **comprehensive** in that it provides guidelines by indicating broad goals which must be translated into plans, policies, and action strategies.

The challenge of the General Plan is to establish clear and sustainable direction. A statement of the most important dimensions of community character to be preserved or achieved as change occurs is essential.

The following vision statement is excerpted from the ***Downtown Revitalization Task Force Phase I Report, August 1990:***

South Pasadena is a desirable community in which to live and work. Although located in the midst of a sprawling metropolitan area, it is a unique small town with main street commercial areas at its heart surrounded by traditionally family-oriented neighborhoods. South Pasadena has quality education, a strong religious community, an extensive network of parks and a rich architectural heritage. Dynamic civic organizations, a population of ethnic and cultural diversity, and a vital seniors group further enrich our small-town quality of life.

As the new decade begins, however, South Pasadena is faced with the twin threats of burgeoning multi-residential growth and continued deterioration of its commercial areas and business tax base. In order to preserve our small-town feeling and to flourish in the 1990's and beyond, South Pasadena must be committed to the goals of revitalizing its commercial areas and preserving its single-family residential character. To achieve these goals, we must develop an environmentally-sensitive strategy that balances the issues of quality of life and historic and cultural preservation with the economic needs of the community.

We envision the commercial areas being lively pedestrian oriented centers with mostly proprietary businesses. The cornerstone of our commercial districts will be our historic buildings. Through facade restoration programs and design review standards, we will preserve our heritage while encouraging complementary new development. Signage guidelines will ensure good business identification while enhancing the image of our commercial areas. Parking and traffic will be designed to successfully support the businesses while being in harmony with the small town commercial streetscape.

We are committed to maintaining a balance between our existing single and multi-family housing units which honors our traditional values and evolving cultural diversity. Individual neighborhood identities will be preserved, and all new development and remodeling will emphasize quality in design and construction which complements its surroundings.

We believe some limited light manufacturing/industrial activities may be a continuing part of our community, but they should only be permitted where compatible with the surrounding uses. Current industrial/manufacturing areas will be reconsidered for other uses.

To ensure our vision of the future, residents, business owners and City government, working with planning experts and through public forums, will develop an implementation plan. This plan will include developing design and planning guidelines, code revisions and enforcement, as well as economic development, which will serve South Pasadena well into the twenty-first century.

The Vision Statement, and the Guiding Principles emanating therefrom, are intended to document the rationale for the new General Plan in order to facilitate its implementation. The Vision Statement enables future community leaders and citizens to recall and endorse the meaning of the Plan and maintain diligence in carrying out its intent.

1.2C Guiding Principles of the Plan

A cooperative effort involving the Downtown Revitalization Task Force, consultants, city staff, the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), interested citizens, appointed commissions, and the City Council over a period of more than three years has resulted in this General Plan.

The General Plan update process examined a number of pervasive community concerns emanating from the foregoing vision statement, concerns that became instrumental in shaping the General Plan. The resulting guiding principles emphasized by the Plan are intended to set the theme for South Pasadena's growth for the next 15 years:

- **“Managed” Change**

To manage change to allow for transition and revitalization to better serve community needs and to enhance the quality of life.

- **Economic Development/Commercial Revitalization**

To maintain the character of South Pasadena's “main street” commercial areas, to support the proprietary businesses of the City, to avoid deterioration of commercial areas and the business tax base, and to promote those forms of economic development that will provide additional jobs, services, revenues and opportunities to the City and its residents.

- **Neighborhood Protection**

To protect and preserve the character of the traditionally single-family oriented residential neighborhoods of South Pasadena from incursions of traffic, blight and deleterious land uses.

- **Preservation/Conservation of the “Built” and “Natural” Environments**

For the “Built Environment”, to conserve and preserve the historic character of the City by identifying the architectural and cultural resources of the City, by encouraging their maintenance and/or adaptive reuse, and by developing guidelines and regulations for new and infill development assuring design compatibility. For the “Natural Environment” to exercise stewardship of the City's natural resources by adopting effective open space and ridgeline preservation policies, and by establishing hillside development criteria.

- **Housing Balance**

To maintain the balance between single-family and multi-family housing units, encouraging the development of compatible forms of infill housing by zoning and other means.

- **Quality in New Development**

To harmonize physical change to preserve South Pasadena's historic character, scale and “small town atmosphere and prevent undesirable land use, e.g. “mini-malls”.

- **Reduced Auto Dependence/Circulation without Cars**

To emphasize pedestrians over cars in portions of the City, to encourage alternative forms of mobility (bicycle, bus, light-rail), and to assure that transportation improvements and parking are designed to support designated land uses while maintaining harmony with the “small town” commercial streetscape.

- **Fiscal and Economic Viability**

To provide and sustain the highest-quality city facilities and services consistent with sound economics and fiscal responsibility.

- **Regional Coordination**

To coordinate with the County and cities of the region with respect to the attainment of mutually shared objectives in air quality, mobility and congestion management.

These guiding principles are explicitly echoed in the city-wide goals and policies of the Land Use and Community Design Element and serve as the fundamental premises of the other Plan Elements as well.

CHAPTER I

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